



THE GRACE CHURCH CHORISTERS

*“Psallam spiritu et mente”
I sing with the spirit and with
understanding also.
1 Corinthians 14:15*

How would you like to . . .

- Sing the world’s greatest music in a magnificent old church?
- make new friends?
- take trips to interesting places?
- spend a week singing and having fun at a camp on a beautiful lake?
- learn to play the piano?

*If your answer is YES to these questions, then the Grace Church
Choristers is the group for you!!!*





HISTORY

For nearly one thousand years, children (primarily boys until the last fifty years) have sung daily services in the great cathedrals and collegiate chapels of England (Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, for example). The boy sopranos, or trebles, provided the "top line" of the choir while the lower parts (alto, tenor, and bass) were sung by lay clerks, or grown men from the college or community. While these choral programs are taken somewhat for granted in England, similar choirs for children and youth are not as common in the United States.

MISSION

The Grace Church Chorister program seeks to offer a sound musical education to boys and girls from the greater Providence community. The choir is open to boys and girls in grades 2nd through 12th. The choir is committed to musical excellence, self-discipline, and social development. The choristers sing a wide range of repertoire by the greatest composers of sacred music, such as Palestrina, Bach, Händel, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bruckner, and Britten. The chorister program offers an outstanding professional musical education which includes music theory, music history, vocal training and piano lessons. Additionally, the choristers learn about the liturgy and history of the church.



Children of any religious affiliation or none at all are welcome and respected.

Through their participation in the parish's worship, choristers will learn about the Christian faith in the affirming Episcopal tradition. While all choristers and their families are welcome to participate fully in the life of Grace Church, membership is not required, nor do you have to be Episcopalian. (If baptism or confirmation *is desired* for your child, we can assist you in making that happen here at Grace.)

REQUIREMENTS

Auditions are held in the spring (May/June) and require no preparation. Auditions may also be held any time throughout the year by appointment and if space permits.

Prior musical experience is not necessary for admission to the choir, though applicants in sixth grade or beyond should have some prior musical training (piano, school choir, etc.) Each child (along with a parent or guardian) will meet with the Director for a brief personal interview followed by a short musical aptitude and ear test. The most important requirement for entrance to the choir is an unwavering commitment of time: steadfast attendance at services and rehearsals.

SKILL LEVELS

Choristers are divided into four skill levels based on the Royal School of Church Music's training scheme: Probationer (beginner – 2nd /3rd Grade), Novice, Junior Chorister, and Senior Chorister.

To progress, certain skill levels, both musical and otherwise, must be achieved. Appropriate ribbons and medals are awarded and worn by the chorister over his or her vestment (choir robe) to show the current standing.

Probationer: Cassock only

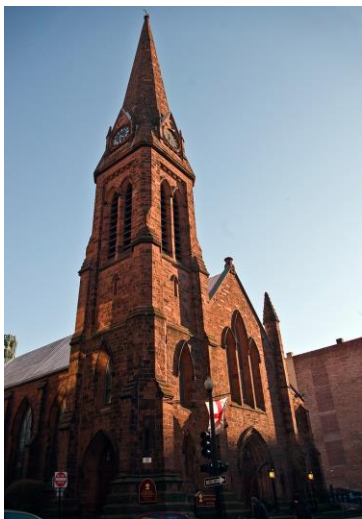
Novice: Cassock, Surplice, and Light Blue Ribbon with Medal

Junior Chorister: Cassock, Surplice, and Dark Blue Ribbon with Medal

Senior Chorister: Cassock, Surplice, and Red Ribbon with Medal



In addition, a Head Chorister and Deputy Head Chorister are chosen each year to assist the Director with choir leadership.



REHEARSAL AND SERVICE SCHEDULE

Weekdays

Wednesdays: 5:30-7:00pm (*optional*)

Fridays: 5:45-7:00pm (*mandatory*)

Sundays

8:45am (for 10am Sung Eucharist)

11:30am-12:00pm (after the service)

2:30pm (for 4pm Choral Evensong)*

There is one full mandatory rehearsal at Grace Church on Friday evenings, which includes a light supper. The Choristers rehearse with the Adult Choir following church on the Sundays they are scheduled to sing. This rehearsal is approximately 20 to 30 minutes. **Approximately once monthly, the Choristers sing for Choral Evensong instead of the 10am Sung Eucharist. A detailed calendar of rehearsals and performances is distributed to chorister families at the beginning of the choir season (schedule subject to slight alteration).*

CHOIR CAMP

The Choristers (though not Probationers) enjoy a week of Choir Camp, held at the Incarnation Center in Ivoryton, CT. This beautiful recreational setting is owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, and includes a gorgeous lake with multiple water fronts. The camp is fully accredited and insured. In addition to rehearsing and



preparing for the fall season of singing, choristers enjoy swimming, water slide, zip line, rock-climbing, hiking, campfires and lots of good food! The camp is staffed by the Director, Associate Director of Music, the Rector, Soprano Section Leader and qualified, trained counselors. Additionally, parents of choristers volunteer to provide additional chaperoning throughout the week. The Camp dates for 2020 are August 11-15.



TRIPS

Approximately every three or four years, the choir embarks on a tour of the United Kingdom. The focal point of the tour is singing for daily services while serving as “choir in residence” at a cathedral.

Currently a trip is planned to England (Lincoln Cathedral) and Scotland (St.

Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh) from July 20th –August 2nd, 2020.



Scholarships are available to help cover costs associated with the UK tour after consultation with the Director.

On occasion the choir travels to hear other choirs and participate in choral festivals, primarily in the tri-state area. These would primarily be day-trips.

COST

Grace Church offers a warm welcome to all who come to this place. In that spirit, we want the chorister program to be available to any boy or girl who is willing to make the commitment of time and steadfast attendance.

Scholarships are available to cover the cost of vestments, tutoring, snacks, AND choir camp. In the year of an England trip, scholarships will be available for that as well. At the time of acceptance into the choir, an application must be made in writing for partial or full scholarship assistance.

We work on the Honor System: If a family can afford all or part of these costs, we ask that they pay their way so that more funding is available to those in need.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY PARENTS:

My child likes to sing but has never had any music lessons. Can he/she still audition?

Absolutely! A love of music and willingness to learn is more than adequate. That said, if your child is in the sixth grade or above, it is helpful if they have some musical background (piano lessons, school band, etc).

Our family goes to church sometimes, but it’s not an Episcopal church. Does that matter?

No. Families of all faith backgrounds are welcome. In fact, even if your family doesn’t go to church at all, your child can still audition for and participate in the chorister program.

If my child gets into the program, do we (the parents) have to come to church on Sunday?
It isn't a requirement that parents come to church, but remember: this is a church choir and most performances will be in the context of a church service. It will be important for you to show interest in your child's development by coming to some services and hearing him or her sing.

We can't afford the cost of the Choir Camp. Can my child still participate?
Absolutely. Simply let the Director know (in writing) of your need for scholarship to cover part or all of the costs.

What if we need to miss a Sunday because we like to go away some weekends?
A full year (September through June) schedule is distributed in August. Families are expected to plan around the chorister schedule. Because the Choristers usually sing twice monthly, families are strongly encouraged to be here on those Sundays, and plan trips, etc. for those Sundays the Choristers aren't scheduled to sing. However, choristers may miss one Sunday in the fall and one Sunday in the spring, except on **Red Letter Days** (important days in the life of the church when we want everyone here!)



We missed the auditions in the spring. Can we audition during the choir year?
Yes! Mid-year auditions are accepted on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Director.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY POTENTIAL CHORISTERS:

This program sounds like a lot of work. Is it any fun?

Yes, this program requires a lot of work. However, the rewards are really great! Not only do you become a much better musician, you learn personal discipline, and teamwork. And we certainly have FUN as well! Choir camp, trips to hear other singers, and trips to participate in Choir Festivals all help to make the work worthwhile!

I'm involved in lots of activities after school. Do I still have time to be a chorister?

Maybe not. Learning to handle a schedule is something even many adults don't do well! Coming to the weekly rehearsals is not optional, and choristers

may not be excused for long periods of time to participate in other activities. Talk with your parents and decide if this is an activity for which you are willing to make time.

I don't really like going to church. Is that the only place the choir sings?

No, it's not the only place, but it is the MAIN place we sing. And singing in a choir makes church feel very different. You are a LEADER in church when you're in the choir. And your voice helps to inspire all those people who come to church for worship services.

Do I have to wear a uniform to sing in the choir?

For the weekday rehearsals, your school clothes are fine. On Sundays, choristers are asked to wear white shirts with a collar, navy pants or skirts, a tie, dark socks or stockings, and black shoes. The church will provide the ties, and will help with the cost of the rest of the uniform if needed. We wear red and white vestments (or choir robes) on top of the uniform.

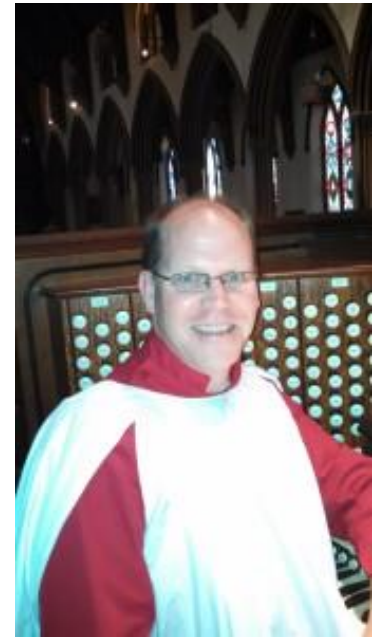
Why do we wear choir robes?

Because we are leaders during worship, we don't want to draw attention to the individual but rather to the choir as a group, so we dress alike. The vestments consist of a long red cassock with a shorter white surplice over it. In addition, we wear fancy white collars around our neck (called ruffs) and our chorister ribbons with medals. When a chorister is fully vested, it's an impressive sight!



About the Director . . .

Vincent Edwards became Organist and Director of Music at Grace Church in September 2015. Prior to his arrival in Providence, Vince has served parishes in Connecticut and New York, most recently St. Paul's on the Green in Norwalk as Director of Music and as Associate Director of the Choristers and Organist at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City. His choirs have performed and sung services in New York City and throughout England and Scotland.



In addition to directing the Grace Church Choir and Choristers, Vince is the founder and director of Grace's professional Ensemble-in-Residence, *Collegium Ancora*. Vince holds degrees from Bethel College (Music and Religion) and Yale University (Choral Conducting and Organ Performance).

***Bless O Lord, us thy servants
who minister in thy temple.
Grant that what we sing with our
lips we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts
we may show forth in our lives.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.***

A CHORISTERS' PRAYER

Contact Information

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